2. AESTHETIC RESOURCES

Evaluation of aesthetic impacts intrinsically deals with the quality of the experience of the visitor to the Forest and surrounding areas. Aesthetics include the sights, sounds, and odors associated with management activities and how the Forest visitor will perceive them.

The general impacts of sounds on the Forest visitor and on sensitive land uses such as adjacent residences and State Parks are addressed in Section VII-12, Noise. Air quality impacts are addressed in Section VII-5, Air Quality. Potential impacts of DFMP implementation on recreation are addressed in Section VII-14, Recreation.

Impacts of timber harvest operations as they affect the Mendocino Woodlands State Park and Outdoor Center, a National Historic Landmark, in terms of the of visual, atmospheric or audible elements that diminish the integrity of the property's significant historic features would be evaluated based on the Criteria of Adverse Effect of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (36 CFR Part 800). This evaluation is described in Section VII-9, Heritage Resources.

The analysis below addresses impacts of proposed management activities on the scenic resources of the JDSF.

2.1 Setting

This section begins with a discussion of the regional and local setting for aesthetic resources. Next, it discusses the existing aesthetic character of JDSF. It concludes with the jurisdictional setting for aesthetics.

2.1.1 Regional and Local Setting

From Southern California to the Oregon border, California’s forested coastal counties are known throughout the world for their scenic beauty. Views of the Pacific Ocean, cliffs, estuaries, rivers, headlands, Monterey cypress, shore and Bishop pine, distinctive individual coast redwood and Douglas-fir trees, and redwood and redwood/Douglas-fir forests (the dominant forest types on JDSF) are key components of these views. Redwood and redwood/Douglas-fir forests, managed in widely varying ways and intensities, extend from Monterey County to the Oregon border. State Highway 1, following along the coast, is perhaps the best known scenic highway in California. Highway 1 in Mendocino County includes all of the above scenery. JDSF, it should be noted, is not visible from Highway 1, or from the popular tourist-destination towns of Mendocino and Fort Bragg.

Intensively managed landscapes such as vineyards, pastures, small towns, and cities also are a part of this region's scenic resources. Section VII.14, Recreation Resources, documents the extensive public redwood forest recreation opportunities in this region.

Mendocino County is broadly known as a scenic and visually diverse rural county in Northern California. Tourists from all over the world are attracted the scenic values associated with its rugged coastline, majestic redwoods forests, vineyards and wineries, and open space. The range of vegetation types that can be found are equally diverse and they include coastal plains, coast redwood, Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine, mixed conifer, pygmy forest, chaparral, oak-grass woodlands, open pastures, and cultivated farmland. Vistas along most county roads and highways have traditionally included rural scenes of active land management, including farming, ranching, and forest management operations.

The most common visual characteristic associated with Jackson Demonstration State Forest (JDSF) is the coast redwood/Douglas-fir forest. The assessment of visual resources will focus on this vegetation type. The redwood forest is generally found within Mendocino County in the coastal watersheds that drain directly into the Pacific Ocean. Redwood stands can also be found in the upper reaches of watersheds that drain into the Eel and Russian Rivers.

The visual characteristics associated with most of the coast redwood/Douglas-fir forest that is visible from state highways and county roads, as well the California Western Railroad line ("Skunk Train") within Mendocino County, include:

a. The vast majority of local forest has been managed or harvested in the past and is currently characterized as young growth. These managed forests often consist of high numbers of small to medium sized trees, and visibility through the forest from public roadways is often limited by a lack of light penetrating the forest canopy, the tree density, dense understory vegetation, and road position on steeper slopes.

b. Natural large landscape vistas are not common, these being more common toward the eastern portion of this vegetation type in locations such as the top of the ridge near Two Rock Lookout, from Anderson Valley, or the area east of Comptche.

c. Focal point features primarily consist of very large trees where they exist and where they stand out from the background vegetation. Large tree focal points are generally limited to scattered residual legacy trees where they exist and in protected areas such as Navarro Redwoods State Park, Montgomery Woods State Reserve, Admiral Standley State Redwoods Reserve, and Mailliard Redwoods State Park.

d. Attractive water features such as estuaries, rivers, and streams are visible, particularly where roads, trails, or the California Western Railroad cross these

features. Major water features in Mendocino County include the Navarro River, Albion River, Little River, Big River and its extensive estuary, and Noyo River. Numerous smaller streams also provide scenic water features.

e. Agricultural features (i.e., vineyards, orchards, grazing) are visible in local areas, such as in Anderson Valley, the Comptche area, and near Camp 19 (McGuires Pond).

f. Visual evidence of timber harvesting is common within the coast redwood/Douglas-fir vegetation type. Large harvest clearings are generally limited to fairly restricted middle and background views from paved public roads. Foreground and middle ground views of these features, containing trees that are less than 20 years old, are more common on native surface and rocked public roads such as along County Road 408 in the Caspar Watershed, and in selected views along the California Western Railroad line between Fort Bragg and Willits.

2.1.2 Existing Aesthetic Character of the JDSF

Landscape Character

The landscape character of the JDSF is one of a redwood and mixed conifer forest rich in flora and fauna. The Forest blankets portions of a coastal plateau and inland mountainous terrain and is deeply dissected by a series of creeks and rivers, the South Fork of the Noyo River being the most noticeable to the general public. While appearing natural in some areas, there are many areas of the JDSF where past timber harvests are readily apparent to the trained observer, giving the overall impression of an extensively managed resource.

Scenic Attractiveness

The majority of the JDSF landscape consists of forested lands and is typical of the forested watersheds within coastal Mendocino County, in terms of overall scenic attractiveness.

Distinctive landscapes on JDSF with a high scenic attractiveness are:

- low-lying river and stream corridors within the Forest where water and riparian vegetation are present
- old growth groves, the most popular and accessible of these being the Waterfall Grove
- pygmy forest areas, a unique ecological community (Sholars 1984)
- historic use areas and structures at Camp 20
- forested areas dominated by a high level of stocking by relatively large trees (The high levels of forest stocking and higher percentages of relatively

mature timber stands, as compared to commercial industrial forest ownerships within Mendocino County, provide aesthetic values for forest visitors who desire to recreate or travel within JDSF)

Scenic Integrity

Because of the expanse of the JDSF, a general lack of developed facilities, and the dense redwood forest that buffers views from popular forest roads, the scenic integrity of JDSF is relatively high. During the past decade, campgrounds, picnic areas, designated trails, and other high-use recreational areas have been buffered from the visual impacts of even-aged timber management activity. Views of mature forest have generally been maintained adjacent to most of these locations. In addition, the spatial allocation of timber management systems has been designed to maintain forested views from much of Highway 20 and other popular travel corridors, as well as from the adjacent State Parks and nearby rural residential properties.

Cultural modifications that may disrupt the scenic integrity of the JDSF to some observers include:

- roads and highways
- the largely cleared PG&E transmission line corridor paralleling Highway 20, which starkly contrasts with the surrounding forest
- forest areas recently harvested under an even-aged management prescription and located near popularly traveled forest roads (e.g. Roads 408 and 500)
- illegally-dumped refuse located along the Forest road system
- abandoned quarry sites that have not been reclaimed and/or have been used for target shooting
- conservation camp facilities

Despite the scenic nature of JDSF, Mendocino County and the redwood forest region in general, human disturbance to the natural environment is a common sight, both within and around JDSF. This disturbed landscape is part of the existing condition that is familiar to forest visitors and residents of the region.
One element in determining the aesthetics of an area is, in part, a function of what viewers have come to expect. Sights that are not consistent with that expectation have a greater chance of decreasing aesthetic enjoyment. Roads, home sites, vacation facilities and converted forest land (e.g., vineyards, orchards and grazing land) are expected land uses in the region and do not necessarily detract from its scenic qualities; and in fact are know to enhance the visitor's experience. Similarly, logging roads, tree stumps, and even-aged treatment areas are common sights for

visitors to managed forests like JDSF; sights they would not expect nor tolerate in a state park or wilderness area.

The other element in determining aesthetics is change. Rapid or dramatic changes in the environment are easily recognized and often result in a negative aesthetic experience. While the gradual increase in tree height and density over time, leading to the eventual obstruction of a scenic view goes unnoticed, in contrast the rapid creation of the same view through the removal of trees may diminish aesthetic enjoyment. When they are first established, even-aged management units, a common sight in a managed forest, may detract from some visitors' experience. However, over time these unnatural openings revegetate and eventually blend into the existing environment. Despite the recent and historic uses of the forest resource and the disturbance to the natural environment as a result of that use, forest users continually return to JDSF for the wide range of benefits the forest has to offer, including aesthetics (see Recreation Section).

Landscape Visibility

Because of its size and topographic conditions, visitors do not view JDSF as a whole; rather, only portions of the Forest are visible at any one time. Middleground vistas are viewed from relatively few ridgeline vantage points, and these views are filtered by standing trees. More typical are limited foreground views from roads, trails, campgrounds, day use recreation areas, and adjacent residences.

- **Roads:** Highway 20 traverses JDSF in an east-west direction. It generally follows a ridgeline along the western half of the Forest, but then follows the North Fork Big River and James Creek. County Roads 408 and 409 provide additional routes from the coast to the interior. As they climb from the coast, both roads generally follow ridgelines. Because Highway 20 and Road 409 pass through forested areas, views are generally limited to the perimeter of the road only. The same is generally true for Road 408 except where it passes through areas in the Caspar watershed where selected forest stands were clearcut in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a part of the long-term scientific watershed study. The clearcut areas immediately adjacent these roads have since developed into a young forest condition that acts to limit, but has not yet eliminated, open vistas of the Caspar Creek drainage.
- **Trails:** Notable hiking trails on JDSF are located in the vicinity of the North Fork of the South Fork Noyo River, Brandon Gulch, Camp One, Chamberlain Creek, Russian Gulch, and the Mendocino Woodlands Special Treatment Area. Because most of these trails follow watercourses in the bottom of steep canyons and are surrounded by forested areas, broad views of the Forest landscape are limited to the foreground. Some of the trails, such as those in the vicinity of the Mendocino Woodlands, are also located along slopes, but in areas designated for forms of uneven-aged management.

- **Campgrounds and Day Use Recreation Areas:** Most of the campgrounds on JDSF are located along the South Fork Noyo River, the North Fork of the South Fork Noyo River, and the North Fork Big River in the Camp 20 Area. Views of the forest landscape are limited to the foreground because the campgrounds are positioned at a viewpoint inferior to the surrounding steep slopes, and are surrounded by well-developed forest.
- **Residences:** Rural residential areas are most common adjacent to the western boundary of JDSF. In general, the residences do not have broad views into the Forest landscape due to the density of redwood forest vegetation when viewed at the oblique angles found on the more gentle topography in this part of the State Forest.
- **Adjacent State Park Units:** There are four state parks located near or adjacent to the western portion of the state forest. These parks are the Jughandle Reserve, Russian Gulch State Park, Mendocino Woodlands State Park, and the Big River addition to the Mendocino Headlands State Park. The view into the State Forest from these parks is very limited, due to the density of forest vegetation. There are common trails between the State Forest and three of these parks (Jughandle, Russian Gulch, and Mendocino Woodlands) that receive regular use. These trails are primarily associated with access to the Pygmy Reserve and the Mendocino Woodlands Special Treatment Area.

  The Jughandle Reserve trail system joins the Forest and provides a loop through an area of pygmy forest, which is being preserved. Management of commercial forest areas nearby will be limited to selective forms of management. Trails in the vicinity of Russian Gulch are located near the canyon bottom or along tributary streams, also in an area designated for selective forms of management.

  Trails that link the Mendocino Woodlands Park to the adjacent Special Treatment Area form a network that includes both stream areas, slopes, and ridges. Vistas are uncommon from these trails, due to the dense forest vegetation. Most of the Special Treatment Area has been designated for forms of management intended to develop into a late-seral habitat condition. As yet, no formalized trails have been developed in the area between the Big River state park addition and adjacent JDSF lands. However, hiking and riding do occur along unmapped, informal trails in the vicinity. These areas are densely forested.

Constituent Analysis

Places on or adjacent to the JDSF assumed to be of a high level of aesthetic concern include: roads within the JDSF that are open throughout the year; designated campgrounds; developed day-use areas; designated trails; other recognized trails and non-motorized recreational routes of travel such as the Little

Lake-Sherwood Inland Trail; river and creek corridors; old-growth groves; the pygmy forest; the Mendocino Woodlands State Park and Outdoor Center; the Mendocino Woodlands Special Treatment Area; Russian Gulch State Park, the Big River unit of the Mendocino Headlands State Park, Jughandle State Reserve; and residences immediately adjacent to the Forest boundary.

2.1.3 Jurisdictional Setting

No plans or policies exist that are specific to scenic resource management of the JDSF. However, recreation is a recognized and established use of the Forest, and management of the Forest is directed towards Maximum Sustained Production (MSP), which includes the consideration of aesthetic enjoyment.

There are no designated scenic highways on the JDSF and none are recommended in the Mendocino County General plan for State Scenic Highway designation.

There are no designated wild, scenic, or recreational rivers on the JDSF in either the Federal or State Wild and Scenic Rivers programs.

JDSF is not located within the Coastal Zone.

2.2 Regulatory Framework

Actions resulting from the DFMP may be subject to the following standards relating to protection of aesthetic resources.

- **Z'Berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1973; Sections 4512 and 4513, Public Resources Code**
  Forest resources and timberlands of the state furnish high-quality timber, recreational opportunities, and aesthetic enjoyment while providing watershed protection and maintaining fisheries and wildlife. The goal of maximum sustained production of high-quality timber products is achieved while giving consideration to values relating to recreation, watershed, wildlife, range and forage, fisheries, regional economic vitality, employment, and aesthetic enjoyment.

- **California Forest Practice Rules (14 CCR Chapters 4, 4.5, and 10)**
  Areas within 200 feet of state park boundaries are designated as Special Treatment Areas (14 CCR § 895.1). Special consideration in Special Treatment Areas shall be given to selection of a regeneration method or intermediate treatment compatible with the objectives for which the special area was established [14 CCR § 913.4(a)].

- **Mendocino Woodlands Outdoor Center Act (PRC 5820)**
  The lands within the Mendocino Woodlands Special Treatment Area and the Mendocino Woodlands State Park and Outdoor Center comprise a portion of a 5,425-acre property conveyed by deed from the United States Government to the Division of Forestry in 1947, and incorporated into JDSF. In establishing the Mendocino Woodlands Special Treatment Area and the Mendocino Woodlands State Park and Outdoor Center, the California legislature recognized that the original transfer of those lands was for "public park, recreational, and conservation purposes." Board policies and the DFMP objectives for the Mendocino Woodlands Special Treatment Area include using it to demonstrate forest management practices that are compatible with recreation for educational purposes.

  The legislature also directed that prior to authorizing the sale and cutting of timber from the Mendocino Woodlands Special Treatment Area or use of the road system within the State Park, the State Forester shall solicit and consider the recommendations of the Department of Parks and Recreation with respect to the prevention of unnecessary or unreasonable interruption or loss of facilities or resources essential to operations of the Outdoor Center (PRC 5829).

- **CDF-Mendocino Woodlands State Park and Outdoor Center Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**
  In 2000, CDF and State Parks entered into an MOU related to forest management practices surrounding the Mendocino Woodlands. The MOU is to be reviewed during the first quarter of each year and can be terminated by either party upon 30 days notice. This MOU includes provisions for:

  - protection of the Mendocino Woodlands water collection systems to insure the integrity and purpose of the systems;
  - consideration for managing a large portion of the Special Treatment Area in order to accelerate recruitment of late-seral habitat;
  - maintenance of Roads 700, 720, and 730;
  - use of Mendocino Woodlands roads by CDF; and
  - a 200-foot harvest exclusion buffer from camp areas, recreational cabins, or main roads located within the lands administered by State Parks. This buffer does not apply to forest management research operations within the Railroad Gulch Silvicultural Study area.

2.3 Proposed JDSF Management Measures

2.3.1 Goals and Objectives

Future JDSF management within the DFMP places a priority upon aesthetics near homes, recreational facilities including adjacent state park units, and main travel

corridors. Forest management includes the handling of forest crop and forest soil so as to achieve maximum sustained production of high quality forest products while giving consideration to values relating to recreation and aesthetic enjoyment (Section 4639, Public Resources Code).

Goals and objectives of the DFMP combine aesthetic considerations with recreation on the JDSF. The following statements relate to aesthetic resources:

Goal #2. Timber Management: Manage the Forest on the sustained yield principle consistent with environmental constraints related to watershed, wildlife, fisheries, and aesthetic and recreational enjoyment.

Objectives: Manage forest stands to produce sustained yields of high quality timber products and public trust resources. Maintain flexibility in forest management in order to provide a comprehensive demonstration, education and research program.

Goal #5. Recreation and Aesthetic Enjoyment: Plan for and provide low impact recreational opportunities that are compatible with forest management objectives and healthy ecological processes, and that are consistent with historic recreational use characteristics.

Objectives:

- Continue to utilize a style of recreational improvement that is generally low impact and rustic in nature. Develop campground and day use areas so that they are concentrated in identified recreation corridors.
- During timber management activities conducted adjacent to residential areas, consider and mitigate the project's effects on the casual and informal recreational uses of the State Forest by the Forest's neighbors.
- In cooperation with the California Department of Parks and Recreation, establish forest management demonstration areas compatible with recreation for educational purposes adjacent to the Mendocino Woodlands Outdoor Center and the Pygmy Forest Reserve.

2.3.2 Specific Management Actions

Facility Style

In accordance with Board of Forestry and Fire Protection policy, recreational facilities will generally be maintained to provide a rustic and informal experience. No guidance is provided in the DFMP about other visitor-serving facilities, such as the Forest Learning Center or Interpretive Center facilities.

Recreation Corridor

The DFMP establishes the concept of defined Recreation Corridors. The size (width) of these corridors is to be determined by aesthetic considerations from the point(s) of concern. The DFMP generally defers the explicit definition of the Recreation Corridors until a user-survey is conducted as part of the JDSF recreation management program (see also Section VII-14, Recreation). However, the DFMP does propose a defined corridor width of 300 feet around major campgrounds and identifies that this zone will preclude even-aged silviculture, but does not specify any other particular management prescription for that zone.

A defined corridor width of 300 feet around campgrounds has been incorporated into current planning. Appropriate timber management options within this corridor, while not being specifically identified, could potentially include single tree selection, hazard tree removal, or no harvesting. Other management options for the Recreation Corridor identified in the DFMP include restricting the timing of timber operations to avoid conflicts with high visitor-use weekends or restricting operating hours to minimize noise pollution.

Special Concern Areas

A series of 23 Special Concern Areas are identified in DFMP with the intent of directing timber management practices to respect the sensitive resources within these areas. To varying degrees, these areas would have restricted timber management options that, even if not required specifically for aesthetic purposes, would likely benefit the integrity of the visual setting.

Definitive management prescriptions within Special Concern Areas are:

- Areas not to be harvested: Cypress groups; Pygmy forest; Jughandle Reserve; Reserved old growth groves; and Conservation camps.
- Areas limited to no harvest or special uneven-aged regimes: Watercourse and lake protection zones.
- Areas excluded from even-aged management: Campground buffers, ; Mendocino Woodlands Special Treatment Area; and late seral development areas.

Forest management practices within the remaining Special Concern Areas are not specifically prescribed but are often qualified by the statement “only a limited range of silviculture is allowed in these areas.”

Four of the Special Concern Areas are to include qualitative aesthetic considerations in the Forest management prescriptions. These are:

- Road and trail corridors: buffer areas along trails and roads to maintain aesthetic qualities valued by the public.
- Buffers adjacent to non-timberland neighbors: areas along the boundary of JDSF adjacent to non-industrial timberland owners where a buffer zone is designated to minimize impacts on neighbors.
- State Park Special Treatment Areas: areas adjoining State Parks where the application of silvicultural systems must take the values of the State Park into consideration.
- Woodlands Special Treatment Area (excluding the Railroad Gulch Silvicultural Study Area): where silvicultural activities are focused on promoting the accelerated development of late-successional forest conditions, maintaining aesthetic qualities, and limiting impacts on the operation of Mendocino Woodlands.

California Forest Practice Rules (FPRs)

The JDSF DFMP incorporates the California Practice Rules as minimum standards. The FPRs contain many measures intended, in part, to minimize the potential impacts of forest management activities on scenic resources, including the following:

- Individual evenaged regeneration units typically are limited to 20 acres and cannot exceed 40 acres.
- Individual evenaged regeneration units must be separated by an area at least as large as the proposed harvest unit or 20 acres; whichever is smaller, and separated by at least 300 feet in all directions.
- Units adjacent to an evenaged regeneration unit can undergo regeneration harvesting after a specified amount of time has passed, or the evenaged unit has regenerated to a defined age- or size-class composition.
- Special consideration for aesthetic enjoyment shall be given to selection of silvicultural treatments and timber operations within 200 feet of the edge of the traveled surface of any permanent road maintained by the County, or the State.
- Special consideration for aesthetic enjoyment shall be given to the selection of silvicultural methods and timber operations within 200 feet of adjacent non-federal lands not zoned TPZ.
- See also description of Special Concern Areas, above.

2.4 Thresholds of Significance

Based on guidance provided by CEQA (PRC Section 21001 and the CEQA Guidelines), an impact of the proposed project would be considered significant if it:

- has a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista
- substantially degrades the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings
- creates a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area

Not all changes to the environment lead to a significant impact to aesthetics; however, identifying specific thresholds is extremely personal and subjective. In determining whether an impact to aesthetics exists one must first evaluate the nature of the project site (e.g., visibility, integrity, uniqueness) and then assess the degree of the impact (e.g., size, intensity). The following criteria contribute to determining whether physical changes significantly affect aesthetics:

- **The potential for and frequency of viewing by the general public.** The aesthetic effects of a project are more likely to be significant if they are highly visible to large numbers of the public over an extended period of time. Projects occurring within sight of major roads, along frequently utilized trails or adjacent to campgrounds may impact the aesthetics for large numbers of people. Projects that are adjacent to residential properties may impact only small numbers of people but over a longer period of time. Projects in remote portions of the Forest, behind locked gates or obscured by vegetation or ridgelines are less likely to significantly impact aesthetics. Changes to views that are seen by limited numbers of people or for only limited duration may be found to be less than significant.
- **The integrity and uniqueness of the existing aesthetic resource.** The magnitude of change necessary to create a significant impact to aesthetics is greater in a disturbed or non-unique environment than in a pristine or rare environment. In managed forests, such as JDSF, timber harvesting is not generally presumed to have a significant adverse effect on aesthetics whereas the same treatment in an unmanaged setting may be significant. In contrast, any treatments to the relatively rare pygmy forest would generally be considered aesthetically significant. Changes to aesthetics where the area has little integrity or uniqueness may be found to be less than significant.
- **The magnitude of the change.** Projects that are small in size or minimal in their physical changes to the environment are unlikely to cause a significant impact to aesthetics. Aesthetic changes associated with paving a forest road would be less than significant whereas, establishing a new forest road may be significant. Large even-aged harvest treatments may be aesthetically significant while dispersed

group selection treatments of the same total acreage may not. Changes to aesthetics where the change is minor may be found to be less than significant.

- **Natural changes to the environment.** Changes to the environment as a result of natural causes such as wildfire, wind events, insect and disease outbreaks, landslides, or vegetative growth or change may cause substantial changes in aesthetics but are not a result of implementing the DFMP. However, they may factor into a cumulative effects analysis.
- **Cumulative impacts.** Significant cumulative impacts to aesthetics may result from the accumulation of impacts that, individually, are not significant but collectively cause an impact. A single even-aged treatment within an assessment area may be found to not impact aesthetics but over time repeated similar treatments may lead to a significant effect.

These criteria are utilized in determining in the subsequent analysis where an impact to aesthetics exists and to develop mitigation that reduces the impact to aesthetics to a less that is less than significant.

2.5 Individual Impacts

The DFMP proposes a full range of timber harvest practices on the JDSF. Evidence of timber harvesting is common within much of the North Coast region, Mendocino County, and the visual environment of JDSF. Timber harvest is consistent with the State Forest mission of demonstrating economical forest management and with the Timber Production zoning of JDSF. The Forest Practices Act states the intent of achieving maximum sustained production of high quality timber products while giving consideration to a range of values, including aesthetic enjoyment [PRC § 4513(b)].

Potential visual quality impacts generally result from changes in color, shape and/or the creation of linear or distracting foreground features that are inconsistent with the surrounding visual character of the landscape. Some of the more common visual impacts associated with timber operations include:

a. The potential contrasting colors of slash or bare earth with the color of the native vegetation. These impacts are generally short term in nature (2 to 5 years). The change in color is restored to a pre-existing condition by either the slash naturally breaking down and/or the native vegetation growing and masking the color change. These potential short-term impacts can also be directly mitigated by treatment of the slash and with prompt revegetation of exposed soil.

b. The creation of openings in an area where breaks in the forest canopy are not consistent with the existing character of the landscape, or the creation of evenaged regeneration units with un-natural shapes. This type of impact can be accentuated by a corresponding change in color, light, or shadow that clearly outlines the edge of the newly created forest clearing. The impacts associated with the creation of

uncharacteristic shapes in the forest canopy are gradually reduced as the forest develops and canopy lines tend to become more defuse and gradual, blending into the surrounding landscape. This recovery process for middle ground and foreground views could be delayed if the shape of the cleared opening has sharp rectangular corners or the edge of the harvest unit is clearly silhouetted against the sky. Views with respect to the shape of an evenaged regeneration unit can be significantly mitigated at the time of creation by replicating natural patterns found in the environment, and by leaving individual trees or groups of trees within the bounds of these harvest units. Leaving trees in irregular patterns or at variable densities within newly created harvest units serves to break up the hard edge of the harvest unit and helps to minimize the differences in canopy structure when viewed from oblique angles.

c. The creation of linear features such as forest roads which are visible in middle or background views or the creation of power line right of ways (not in CDF's control) are clearly out of character with the general forest characteristics. Protection of aesthetic values will be a function of viewer position and road position on the slope, silvicultural method employed, and road construction method. Visual quality values affected by road construction tend to recover as cutbanks and fillslopes revegetate, and as trees between the roadway and viewpoints grow and obscure the view of the road. Careful site-specific visual assessment and road system planning can in almost all cases mitigate potential visual quality impacts to non-significant levels.

d. The creation of foreground features that are clearly visible from forest roads can include slash piles, log decks, and deep slash. These features can be mitigated on a site-specific basis by disposal, lopping, or the scattering of slash and cull material.

Within the context of a Demonstration Forest, potential impacts to scenic resources would range from:

- No impact, in non-timber areas or Special Concern Areas that will not be harvested (approximately 3% of JDSF is assigned to such prescriptions);
- Minimal impact in areas managed to develop high density, large tree, late seral characteristics (approximately 23% of the JDSF is assigned to such treatments);
- Potential short-term, minor impacts in uneven-aged timber harvest areas (approximately 45 % of the JDSF may be assigned to such treatments); and
- Potential significant impacts in even-aged timber harvest areas (approximately 29% of the JDSF may be assigned such treatments), where those areas would be openly visible from popular routes of travel, trails, recreation areas or adjacent parks and residences (only a small proportion of the area that can be assigned to even-aged harvests would be visible from these vantage points).

These impacts are further described below.

Impact 1: *Even-aged timber harvests would have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.* (Less than Significant after Mitigation)

There are relatively few background vistas from major ridgeline roads of the JDSF landscape currently available. Where views do penetrate the Forest cover, they tend to focus on the foreground and middleground landscape. In many cases, but not all, past timber harvests have avoided clearcutting immediately adjacent to major forest roads, thus screening out vistas over the JDSF.

The DFMP specifies 300-foot wide Road and Trail Corridors along specified roads and trails. Further, the DFMP proposes to establish additional Recreation Corridors following completion of a proposed recreation user survey. These corridors would benefit the management of scenic vistas by both screening views to even-aged harvests and opening views where appropriate. The DFMP also provides for buffers around campgrounds.

Within areas of the JDSF where uneven-aged silviculture prescriptions are to be applied, there would be less than significant long-term impacts on scenic vistas. When adjacent to locations with a high level of scenic concern, uneven-aged silviculture prescriptions could be directed to improve scenic vistas and could be a beneficial impact.

Even-aged management prescriptions are proposed in the central and eastern portions of the JDSF and would not be seen from outside the JDSF. Potential impacts on scenic vistas would be project-specific to each harvest. Potential impacts on scenic vistas created by even-aged management are most evident by the creation of a non-natural edge effect where clearcut areas meet the surrounding forest. This edge effect is generally noticeable in two circumstances: where the boundaries of the harvested unit strikingly contrast with the lines of the natural topography, and on ridgelines where trees are silhouetted against the sky. A visible example of this impact is the PG&E right-of-way, which is seen from Highway 20. The right-of-way clearing has created a walled canyon effect that draws attention to itself.

In order to minimize the impacts of even-aged forest management on scenic vistas, the following mitigation measures are recommended for adoption:

Mitigation 1: For even-aged timber harvest plans, conduct field evaluations by a RPF or his or her designee to determine the visibility of the THP area to the Forest visitor as seen from roads, trails, and recreation areas. Evaluations will include, but be not limited to, consideration of the following factors:

- the potential frequency of viewing by the general public,
- the degree and duration of vistas,
- the general topography of the THP area in relation to the view aspect,

- and type and density of forest canopy and understory cover of forest areas surrounding the THP area.

The RPF will make a finding of whether or not the evaluation leads to a conclusion that a significant impact to a scenic vista exists. Where appropriate, to visually soften and mitigate significant impacts created by even-aged management on the integrity of scenic views from designated overlooks visible to significant numbers of general forest visitors, the THP shall include one or a combination of the following: modify the configuration of the harvest area to better reflect topography and natural patch shapes; modify the configuration of the harvest area to avoid spanning ridgelines in whole, or in part; reduce the size of the individual harvests units and/or total harvest area; or leave selected standing trees along the harvest edge boundaries.

Monitoring 1.
Timing: During the life of the JDSF Management Plan
Scope: Even-aged management THPs
Implementation: the Department
Monitoring Responsibility: the Department

Under alternative A, there would be no impact on the quality of existing vistas, since there is no timber harvesting or other significant disturbance of vegetation. However, there will be no vegetation management to maintain foreground openings that allow for vistas; thus, there will be a reduction in views over time as vegetation regrowth occurs. These effects will result in a less than significant impact.

Alternative B includes higher levels of even-aged timber management than the project alternative (C1, the May 2002 DFMP). Other than generally calling for demonstrating compatibility between forest management and recreation use, alternative B provides no specific protections for scenic vistas beyond those required in existing laws such as the FPRs. As a result, alternative B could result in a significant adverse impact on scenic vistas. These impacts could be mitigated by providing the kinds of buffers and corridors provided in the DFMP and by adopting Mitigation 1, above.

Alternative C2 is similar to alternative C1, with the addition of an increased level of review, analysis, and mitigation for aesthetic concerns in planning for individual timber harvest activities and even-aged harvest proposals. These measures are similar to Mitigation 1, above. Given these protections, Alternative C2 would have a less than significant impact.

Alternatives D, E, and F provide higher levels of consideration for aesthetic values and recreation than does alternative C1. These alternatives also greatly reduce or eliminate the use of clearcutting and other even-aged management as compared to alternatives B, C1, and C2. As a result, these alternatives would not be expected to have significant adverse impacts on visual resources.

Impact 2: *Timber harvests and related activities would substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of Special Treatment Areas or buffer areas that are identified but not specifically defined in the DFMP.* (Less than Significant after Mitigation)

Limitations on activities in STAs and buffer areas are designed to address potentially significant adverse short-term visual impacts. Aesthetic impacts related to the sights of equipment and activities that are evident during timber harvest operations are short-term impacts and are typical experiences for managed timberlands. Given the protections in place and the short-term nature of these impacts, they are considered less than significant.

The long-term effects of forest management practices on the scenic character and quality of the JDSF would generally be related to site-specific changes in forest structure as seen from roads, non-motorized trail routes, recreation staging areas, campgrounds, day use recreation areas, adjacent residences, the Mendocino Woodlands State Park and other adjacent State Park units, where a high level of aesthetic concern can be assumed. Impacts to the visual quality of the Forest structure are chiefly related to certain evenaged mangement activities, the disruption to vegetation of the Forest floor caused by most timber harvest operations, clearings required for landings, and accumulated visible slash that can remain evident for years.

To address impacts on the visual character and integrity of the JDSF, the DFMP prescribes no harvesting or some form of restricted timber harvesting within the 23 identified Special Concern Areas. The DFMP also provides for buffers around some Special Concern Areas and other forest resources that would mitigate the impacts of timber management on aesthetic resource. Buffers that are specifically defined in the DFMP are:

Campgrounds and day-use areas buffers--where timber harvesting within 300 feet of campgrounds and day-use areas will be planned and conducted with the designated site use in mind.

Road and trail corridors—specified 300-foot buffers in the DFMP, plus additional corridors to be considered for designation following recreation user survey.

Slash abatement zones—where main access routes to high-use recreation areas will have slash abatement within 50 feet of the road.

Non-catastrophic tree mortality and down wood retention zones–- within old-growth management areas, WLPZs, or within 100 feet of old-growth groves.

Watercourse and Lake Protection Zones--where a series of management prescriptions are defined to include, but not be limited to: a 25-foot no-harvest zone; an Equipment Exclusion Zone; leaving uncut the 10 largest trees per 330 feet of stream channel within

50 feet of the watercourse transition line; retaining a minimum of 240 sq. ft. of conifer basal area within the WLPZ following harvest activity; reentry no more frequently than every 20 years in Class I WLPZs; and retention of native hardwoods except where species imbalance has occurred.

Neighbor/State Park Buffer Special Concern Area--a 200-foot zone has been established along all neighboring non-industrial timberland ownerships and State Parks where the silvicultural method has been restricted or scenic values must be considered in selection of an appropriate silvicultural system.

Additional protections not described in the DFMP but employed by CDF include:

- A 200-foot harvest exclusion buffer from camp areas, recreational cabins, or main roads located within Mendocino Woodlands State Park. This buffer does not apply to the Railroad Gulch Silvicultural Study area.
- 200-foot buffers have historically been considered around residential properties that are adjacent to the Forest boundary. The type of timber management that has occurred within these buffers has been based on discussions with individual property owners.

With the exceptions listed above, buffer areas and the management practices within them are not specifically defined in the DFMP. Where they have been defined, comments made through the public Scoping process expressed the sentiment that the buffers were not necessarily sufficient to mitigate aesthetic impacts.

Buffers that involve no timber harvesting or restricted harvesting with no clearcutting would generally filter and/or direct views from areas or routes where there would be a high level of aesthetic concern. How buffers work in terms of blocking, screening, or directing views is very site-specific and typically addressed in the development of a timber harvest plan.

In addition to the mitigation for Impact 1 above, in order to minimize the impacts of forest management to the existing visual character or quality of the JDSF and its surroundings, the following mitigation measure shall be applied:

Mitigation 2. For all timber harvest plans conducted within or adjacent to Special Treatment Areas or buffer areas that are identified but not specifically defined in the DFMP, conduct field evaluations by a qualified RPF or other qualified professional, as determined by CDF, to determine the visibility of the THP area. Evaluation will consider, but not be limited to:

- the potential frequency of viewing by the general public,
- the degree and duration of views from areas of concern;

- presence of distinctive visual attributes such as rock outcrops, streams, or distinctive flora;
- type and density of forest canopy and understory cover;
- and general topography in relation to the view aspect.

Evaluations should take into account the configuration of the THP in relation to the areas around it. The RPF will make a finding whether or not the evaluation leads to a conclusion that a significant impact to a scenic vista exists. Where appropriate to visually screen views from Special Concern Areas, the Mendocino Woodlands State Park and Outdoor Center, and other state park units adjacent to JDSF, or to direct views to provide desirable vistas, modify the width of the buffer appropriately (wider or narrower). Designate timber harvest practices within buffer areas to be one or a combination of single-tree selection, hazard tree removal, or no harvesting, as appropriate.

Monitoring 2.
Timing: During the life of the JDSF Management Plan
Scope: THPs within or adjacent to Special Concern Areas
Implementation: the Department
Monitoring Responsibility: the Department

Under alternative A, there is no timber harvesting or other vegetation management. As vegetation grows, the visual quality of the site and its surroundings will improve over time, resulting in a beneficial effect.

Under alternative B, there are no Special Concern Areas, there is a greater reliance on even-aged management, and there are limited considerations for the development of late seral forests. Because of this, alternative B has a higher potential than C1 for causing significant adverse impacts at the project site and in the surrounding viewsheds. These potential significant impacts could be mitigated using the Special Concern Area approach of alternative C1, plus Mitigation 2, above. Alternatively, mitigations could be developed and applied at the individual THP level following standard FPR considerations.

Alternatives C2 through F contain more provisions than C1 for aesthetic considerations. Alternatives D through F include little to no clearcutting or other evenaged management and provide for greater levels of late seral forest development. These alternatives would have a less than significant impact of the visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

Impact 3: *Facility development would create a new source of light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.* (Less than Significant after Mitigation)

Developments proposed within the DFMP that could involve lighting or glare are the Forest Learning Center and Forest Interpretive Center. As presented in the DFMP, these proposals are conceptual and would be subject to subsequent environmental review.

The DFMP identifies that the Interpretive Center may be built near the historic schoolhouse located in the Camp 20 area, adjacent to Highway 20. Because of the location, there would be no impact to campgrounds or other land uses that would be sensitive to light or glare created by the facility.

Siting criteria identified in the DFMP for the Forest Learning Center include:

- access from Highway 20
- opportunity for expansion of facilities over time
- adjacent space for a possible new State Forest headquarters

Other recreational or educational facilities could be proposed under the project alternative as an outcome of the called-for recreation user survey and the availability of funds. Specific projects are speculative at this time. The CEQA process would be followed prior to the construction of any such facilities.

To avoid potential impacts of light or glare, the following mitigation measure shall be applied:

Mitigation 3. Require the Forest Learning Center and Forest interpretive Center to be located and designed in accordance with the CEQA process to not significantly affect day or nighttime views from campgrounds or residential areas. CEQA processes also shall be followed for any other facilities, not identified at this time, that are proposed at a later date.

Monitoring 3.
Timing: During facility site selection
Scope: Forest-wide
Implementation: the Department
Monitoring Responsibility: the Department

Alternative A calls for minimal management, and, thus, no new facilities would be developed and there would be no impact. An increase in facilities could occur under alternative B, which has no specific provisions to address the potential impacts of new facilities. Potential impacts could be mitigated to less than significant through application of Mitigation 3, above.

Alternatives C2 through F vary in the amounts and kinds of recreational facilities that are likely to be pursued. Alternative C2 includes the Forest Learning Center and Forest Interpretive Center. Alternative D calls for an increased emphasis on recreation.

Alternative E calls for the development of low impact recreation opportunities that do not present a significant risk to fish or wildlife. Alternative F is similar to alternative C1, with additional emphasis on recreation in older forest areas and the mitigation of visual impacts. Specific new facilities are speculative for all of these alternatives at this time. Potential significant impacts can be addressed by the application of Mitigation 3, above.

2.6 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts assessment with regard to aesthetic resources is largely a subjective judgment based on human values. This section attempts to build upon the earlier discussion of individual impacts and their associated mitigation measures. Cumulative impacts by definition concerns how individual impacts interact over space and time to create a cumulative effect. Significant adverse cumulative impacts may result from the accumulation of impacts that, individually, are not significant adverse impacts. A cumulative impact may occur when impacts from multiple land use actions are visible from an identified viewshed. These multiple land use actions may occur simultaneously, in succession, or over a period of time insufficient for recovery to occur. The degree to which these land management actions stand out as different from the general character of the surrounding area has a major influence on the degree of impact.

The general assessment area used for aesthetic cumulative effects is the same as used for cumulative watershed effects (see Figure V.3). This assessment area provides a general context for forest management-related aesthetic resources in the area of JDSF. It includes areas that one must travel through in order to reach JDSF. On a more focused basis, an assessment area comprised of the planning watersheds that include at least part of JDSF is appropriate. This more focused assessment area was chosen on the basis of scale and sightlines from the ridgelines of watershed boundaries. Unless standing near the divide, one typically cannot see into one watershed area from another watershed area due to the dividing ridgelines.

The DFMP includes management provisions that will prevent or reduce cumulative effects as a result of forest management activities conducted internal to JDSF.

Provisions of the DFMP that prevent or reduce cumulative effects:

- **Timber Management Areas.** The establishment of timber management areas restricts the form of stand management that can be utilized within a specified geographical area. This approach tends to place the higher disturbance in areas not viewed by large numbers of people. Areas of high public use tend to be located near areas of the Forest that will be managed with partial cutting or selective systems that retain continuous or nearly continuous forest cover. Even-aged management prescriptions are proposed in the central and eastern portions of the JDSF and would not be seen easily from outside the JDSF.

- **Rate of Harvest.** The DFMP proposes an average harvest level of approximately 31 million board feet (MMBF) per year over the first decade, a rate of harvest that is much lower than annual growth. The harvest areas will be dispersed through time and space, and the majority will retain a significant level of forest canopy (DFMP Table 6 and Figure 7). Over the past several decades, subsequent harvests within individual harvest areas have occurred at a relatively low frequency, and generally between 10 to 30 years, providing an opportunity for substantial revegetation and forest growth.
- **Special Concern Areas and Buffer Zones.** Existing regulation, combined with the provisions of the DFMP, will provide for forested buffers adjacent to locations of concentrated public use, including county roads and state highways, campgrounds, state parks, rural residential neighborhoods, and trails. These provisions reduce the opportunity for the impacts of individual or multiple management activities to accumulate, due to low visibility.
- **Topographical Relief.** The topography within JDSF and most of the assessment area is broken by ridges, valleys, and steep slopes. This tends to place large areas of JDSF beyond view from areas utilized by large numbers of people. Most of the popular Forest roads are located near canyon bottoms, where views are obscured by forest growing near the canyon bottom.
- **Tiered Assessment**. Individual projects will be evaluated for potential to produce cumulative aesthetic impacts, and there will be opportunity to modify or eliminate proposals that have potential to produce significant effects. At this time, many potential project-specifics are speculative.

There is potential for management activities conducted within JDSF to combine with activities conducted beyond the borders of the Forest to produce cumulative aesthetic impacts. In the near-term, this potential is relatively low, due to the fact that most of the surrounding forest areas have been fully roaded in the past, and the rate of future harvest is anticipated to be fairly low relative to that of the past 20 years, when much of the surrounding industrial ownerships were harvested with even-aged regeneration systems. These areas are now in a state of regrowth, and forest canopy continues to develop in most areas adjacent to JDSF.

There are very few vistas available to recreationalists, neighboring residents, or travelers that include substantial views of JDSF in combination with adjacent timberlands. Where these vistas exist, the views are distant, reducing the potential for multiple harvest units to significantly affect the overall view.

Three questions will be addressed in order to identify and to guide development of mitigations for potential significant adverse impacts to aesthetic resources. In addition this process will attempt to identify any long standing uses of the State Forest, which are consistent with its mission, that may be in conflict with newly established aesthetic mitigation measures.

1. Are there current significant adverse cumulative effects on aesthetic resources or anticipated potential cumulative effects over the next ten years when the effects of State Forest management are combined with forest operations outside the boundaries of JDSF within the cumulative watershed effects assessment area?

A visual assessment was completed to determine whether there is an existing significant adverse cumulate effect on aesthetic resources or whether there exits the potential for future significant adverse cumulative effects. This visual assessment found all existing and most likely potential future cumulative aesthetic impacts to be less than significant. This conclusion is supported by the following findings:

- The coast redwood forest ecosystem has a very productive growth potential due to its ability to sprout and to grow at high stocking levels. This productive capacity provides redwood forests with the ability to recover from many kinds of visual disturbances over a relatively short amount of time. As noted earlier, within the assessment area, visibility distances are rather limited, and potential vista points are not abundant.
- Foreground views (visibility distances up to 200 feet) and focal point vistas (observation points along traveled paths where the duration of view is sufficient, as well as the viewer encouraged, to focus on the scene presented) of recent (less than 20 years old) evenaged silviculture harvest units were not found to be visually dominant elements to the general landscape character during this assessment taken from visual observation positions on paved public roads within the cumulative watershed effects assessment area.
- Older evenaged units can be viewed from public roads within the assessment area. However many of these harvest units now blend into the general landscape character as fully revegetated young forests. The stark edges between newly created evenaged harvest units have been replaced with a greater blending of canopy between harvest units and surrounding stands of older forest, due primarily to the sprouting nature of redwood and native hardwoods, combined with high growth rates.
- The extensive local clearcutting conducted on industry-owned forestlands in the 1980s and 1990s within the Noyo and Big River Watersheds, which were the focus of much public attention, were not currently found to be visually dominant elements of the general landscape when viewed from paved public roads. This current visual condition is due to limited paved public access to locations where these sites can be viewed, combined with the forest growth since these units were harvested.
- Aesthetic resources are assessed during the timber harvest plan review process under the Forest Practice Rules, and mitigation measures are commonly incorporated into the plans located in visually sensitive areas. Visually sensitive

areas may include areas near paved public roads, areas viewed from the California Western Railroad ("Skunk Train"), state parks, and areas not zoned for timber production.

- Forest Practice Rules currently exist that are intended to help retain visual quality within 200 feet of all California State Parks.
- A memorandum of understandings exists between the Western California Railroad and the some of the principle industrial forest landowners within the Noyo Watershed to protect the visual quality along the rail line based on sight distance and slope.
- Timber production levels within Mendocino County have exhibited a significant decline over the past 20 years, and there is no indication of a significant increase during the coming decade.
- The amount of acres harvested within the Noyo and Big River Watersheds from 1986 to 2004 shows a clear trend of declining harvest acreage (see section VII.6.3, Timber Resources), and there is no indication of a return to the level of harvest observed in the past.
- Timber harvest activity is commonly visible from most paved public roads within the assessment area, but the visual results from these operations were found to be subordinate to the general natural character of the landscape. Foreseeable trends do not indicate a change in this condition.

2. Is there a currently existing adverse cumulative effect on aesthetic resources with respect to how forest landscape has been managed to date within the boundaries of the State Forest?

The public scoping for this document clearly indicated a strong desire by some citizens and organizations for the State Forest to place increased importance on recreational and aesthetic resource values.

Staff conducted a visual assessment to determine if adverse cumulative impacts exist within the boundaries of the State Forest. This assessment found existing aesthetic impacts to be less than significant except for the existing P.G.&E. Power Transmission Line Right of Way that runs between the towns of Fort Bragg and Willits. This Power Transmission Line has a deeded legal authority to exist and is beyond the authority of the State Forest to impose new constraints within the limits of the established right of way. The power line right of way requires yearly maintenance in order to provide safe and reliable power to the coastal communities of Mendocino County. Maintenance restricts vegetation with potential to interfere with power transmission. An uncharacteristic linear feature is clearly visible to travelers on State Highway 20.

The conclusion that all other existing visual cumulative impacts within the boundaries of the State Forest to be less than significant is supported by the following findings:

- The coast redwood forest ecosystem has a very productive growth potential due to its ability to sprout and to grow at high stocking levels, and this productive capacity has the ability to mask many kinds of visual disturbances over a relatively short amount of time. As noted earlier, visibility distances are rather limited, and potential vista points are not abundant.
- The general landscape character of JDSF is that of a continuous mosaic of diverse timber stand ages and structures that have historically drawn large numbers of recreational users. This visual environment presented attracts campers, hikers, mountain bikers, horseback riders, picnickers, hunters, woodcutters, and other types of uses.
- The State Forest maintains a high proportion of area devoted to continuous forest cover in managed stands of medium to large trees, and maintains the highest standing timber inventory of any large forest ownership in the coastal watersheds of Mendocino County. The aesthetic resource trend has been one of improving visual quality through adaptive management. This trend is supported by the following observations:

    - The State Forest timber inventory continues to increase. An increasing inventory, while not a direct measure of visual quality, does relate to increasing canopy levels and tree sizes.
    - Ground based yarding systems (tractors) on steep slopes has been significantly reduced since the middle 1980s. The use of tractors for skidding logs exposes the lighter color of the soil, and creates linear features on the slope. Steeper slopes also are more visible at greater distances than more gentle slopes, so the visual disturbance is magnified. The State Forest rarely uses tractors on slopes over 35 percent. The ground-based systems on steeper slopes have been replaced with short span skyline cable systems that vastly reduce visible levels of excavation and soil disturbance.
    - The use of clearcutting has been significantly reduced. The application of even-aged cutting systems generally includes the retention of scattered trees or groups of trees that reduce the level of visual impact, especially when viewed from oblique angles.
    - The use of the selection silvicultural method has increased significantly on the State Forest since the mid 1990s in order to maintain visual quality values as well as to provide working demonstrations for non-industrial timberland owners. This silvicultural method has been the preferred harvest prescription in visually sensitive areas because it provides for continuous forest canopy cover and maintains a diverse mixture of tree sizes. Examples of where this prescription has been used in visually sensitive areas include the Nettles (Road 500), Boundary (Road 350), Pleiades (Highway 20), Bob Woods (Bob

Woods Trail), Hi Chute (Road 720) and Brandon Gulch (Brandon Gulch Trail) Timber Sales.

- The width of Watercourse and Lake Protection Zones has increased significantly since the middle 1980s, and the DFMP further augments these zones in a manner that will better protect visual values. Many of the State Forest roads and trails are located in or adjacent to these protection zones. The increased width has promoted an increase in visual quality in an area high in public sensitivity and recreational use.
- Buffer zones adjacent to campgrounds and trails have been routinely maintained, and forms of stand management that help retain scenic values have been utilized..
- The State Forest has implemented an informal policy of notifying and offering to discuss silvicultural options in areas immediately adjacent to rural residential homes. Harvesting has been limited primarily to no-cut and selective options, depending upon the wishes of each neighboring property owner.
- Aesthetic resources are assessed both individually and cumulatively during the timber harvest plan review process for all proposed timber harvest plans under the California Forest Practice Rules. Mitigation measures are routinely incorporated within the plans located in visually sensitive areas.
- The California Department of Parks and Recreation and CDF have a memorandum of understanding concerning the relationship of the Mendocino Woodlands and JDSF. Key points of this MOU related to aesthetic and recreation values were listed above in section 2.2.

3. Given the constraints and mitigations already identified to protect aesthetic resources, are additional mitigation measures necessary to correct past adverse cumulative effects or to avoid potential new adverse cumulative effects?

Based upon the findings above, new mitigation was found not to be necessary to mitigate past cumulative effects. because none were found to be significant or within the State Forest's authority to implement. Mitigation is required to prevent potential new adverse cumulative effects with respect to aesthetic resources.

Cumulative Impact 1: ***Timber harvesting, timber sale road construction, and/or Road Management Plan implementation would substantially degrade scenic vistas in a cumulative manner.*** **(Less than Significant after Mitigation)**

Mitigation 4: For all timber harvesting plans, the RPF or designee shall conduct field evaluations to determine the visibility of the proposed THP area in combination with the existing viewshed, past, present, and probable future operations, to the Forest visitor as seen from areas of high public use. Evaluations will consider, but not be limited to:

- the potential frequency of viewing by the general public,
- the degree of visibility,
- duration of view,
- general topography of the view area,
- character of the forest canopy and understory cover,
- visually dominant landscape features,
- visual recovery trajectory,
- and past visual forest management impacts within the viewscape regardless of ownership.

The RPF will make a finding of whether or not the evaluation leads to a conclusion that a significant adverse cumulative impact to a scenic vista exists.

This mitigation must be applied to areas including but not limited to all foreground views (views up to 200 feet), to the middleground vistas looking into James Creek from Highway 20 and the surrounding viewscape from the Camp 20 Recreation Area from Highway 20, and any identified background views of JDSF seen from areas of high pubic use.

Where appropriate to maintain visual quality and to mitigate cumulative impacts created by forest management on the integrity of scenic views, the THP shall include one or a combination of the following:

- modify the project to reflect the natural character of the landscape
- incorporate edge treatments into the design of the proposed operation (feathered edges, irregular harvest unit design, etc.)
- create islands or patches of trees to mitigate visual impacts under silvicultural methods involving the use of variable retention
- retain stems under an appropriate silvicultural prescription to maintain visual quality
- minimize major visual lines if not in character with the viewed landscape.
- modify the size, shape and configuration to fit the character of the surrounding landscape
- delay harvest until the visible landscape has recovered a forested appearance

Monitoring.
Timing: During the life of the JDSF Management Plan
Scope: All proposed THPs
Implementation: the Department
Monitoring Responsibility: the Department

Given the absence of timber harvesting and road construction under alternative A, there would be no impact for his alternative. Alternative B has higher levels of even-aged management and less late seral development than alternative C1, and only Forest Practice Rule provisions for cumulative visual impacts. Mitigations could be developed at

the project level following standard Forest Practice Rule considerations for cumulative impacts to aesthetic resources. Alternatively, alternative B could be mitigated by adoption of Mitigation 4, above.

Alternative C2 is similar to C1 and its potential for significant cumulative pacts on scenic vistas and could be mitigated by adopting Mitigation 4. Alternatives D through F provide more protections for aesthetic resources and also use little or no clearcutting or other even-aged harvest prescriptions. However, since all of these alternatives involve harvesting to some degree and include the Road Management Plan, they have the potential to result in significant cumulative effects. Alternatives D through E could be mitigated with Mitigation 4, resulting in less than significant impacts.

2.6 Alternatives Comparison

Comparisons of impacts among alternatives are presented in Table VII.2.1.

Table VII.2.1. Comparison of Impacts among Aesthetics Alternatives.						
Alternatives						Discussion
Impact*	1	2	3	4	5	*Impact Levels: (1) Beneficial (2) No Impact (3) Less than Significant (4) Less than Significant after Mitigation (5) Significant–Mitigation Not Feasible
Impact 1. Even-aged timber harvests would have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.						
Alt. A			■			With no timber harvesting, the quality of existing scenic vistas will increase over time (beneficial effect). However, there will be a reduction in the number of views over time as vegetation grows in foreground areas and blocks scenic vistas (less than significant adverse effect).
Alt. B				■		The long-term quantity of scenic vistas would increase but the quality of scenic vistas will degrade where even-aged management is seen. Measures proposed in the DFMP, including buffers around Special Concern Areas, plus the additional mitigation specified in this section, would reduce the impact to less than significant levels. Measures proposed in the DFMP would have to be added as mitigations to alternative B.
Alt. C1 May 2002 DFMP				■		
Alt. C2 Nov. 2002 Plan			■			Contains measures equivalent to alternative C1 plus the mitigation developed for C1. No new mitigation is needed to achieve less than significant impacts.
Alt. D			■			With an emphasis on higher levels of aesthetic consideration, greater focus or sole reliance on uneven-aged management, and Recreation Corridors, these alternatives would have a less than significant impact on scenic vistas throughout the JDSF
Alt. E			■			
Alt. F			■			

Table VII.2.1. Comparison of Impacts among Aesthetics Alternatives.						
Alternatives						Discussion
Impact*	1	2	3	4	5	*Impact Levels: (1) Beneficial (2) No Impact (3) Less than Significant (4) Less than Significant after Mitigation (5) Significant–Mitigation Not Feasible
Impact 2. Timber harvests and related activities would substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of Special Treatment Areas or buffer areas that are identified but not specifically defined in the DFMP.						
Alt. A						With no timber harvesting, the visual character of the Forest at the site level will improve steadily over time.
Alt. B						This alternative's relatively greater reliance on even-aged prescriptions and limited consideration for development of late seral conditions poses a higher potential for degradation of visual character or quality. These impacts could be mitigated using the Special Concern Area approach used in C1, plus Mitigation 2. Alternatively, mitigations would be developed and applied at the individual THP level following standard FPR considerations.
Alt. C1 May 2002 DFMP						Alternative provides many protections for visual quality at this scale, including Special Concern areas and other protections. Mitigation 2 provides additional analysis of aesthetic protection needs at the project level.
Alt. C2 Nov. 2002 Plan						These alternatives would result in some beneficial long-term effects associated with increased late seral, mixed-age, and hardwood management to varying degrees (with alternatives D, E, and F superior to alternative C2). All alternatives would also result in short-term visual impacts since all involve timber harvest to varying degrees, and all would require protections with buffers and corridor as specified for each of these alternatives.
Alt. D						
Alt. E						
Alt. F						

Table VII.2.1. Comparison of Impacts among Aesthetics Alternatives.						
Alternatives						Discussion
Impact*	1	2	3	4	5	*Impact Levels: (1) Beneficial (2) No Impact (3) Less than Significant (4) Less than Significant after Mitigation (5) Significant–Mitigation Not Feasible
Impact 3. Facility development would create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.						
Alt. A						No development would be included that would cause light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.
Alt. B						No specific new facilities are proposed; however, a need for new facilities could be identified. No specific provisions provided for addressing potential impacts. Impacts could be addressed through application of Mitigation 3.
Alt. C1 May 2002 DFMP						Construction of the Forest Learning Center and Forest Interpretive Center or other new facilities could involve significant lighting and change the quality of the night skies if located near campgrounds or residences unless mitigated as specified in Mitigation 3.
Alt. C2 Nov. 2002 Plan						
Alt. D						
Alt. E						
Alt. F						

Table VII.2.1. Comparison of Impacts among Aesthetics Alternatives.						
Alternatives						Discussion
Impact*	1	2	3	4	5	*Impact Levels: (1) Beneficial (2) No Impact (3) Less than Significant (4) Less than Significant after Mitigation (5) Significant–Mitigation Not Feasible
Cumulative Impact 1. Timber harvesting, timber sale road construction, and/or Road Management Plan implementation would substantially degrade scenic vistas in a cumulative manner.						
Alt. A						With no timber harvesting, the quality of existing scenic vistas will increase over time (beneficial effect). However, there will be a reduction in the number of views over time as vegetation grows in foreground areas and blocks scenic vistas (insignificant adverse effect).
Alt. B						This alternative's relatively greater reliance on even-aged prescriptions and limited consideration for development of late seral conditions poses a higher potential for degradation of visual character or quality. Mitigations would be developed and applied at the individual THP level following standard FPR considerations for cumulative impacts to aesthetic resources. Alternatively, Mitigation 4 could be applied to address potential cumulative impacts.
Alt. C1 May 2002 DFMP						These alternatives would result in some beneficial long-term effects associated with increased late seral, mixed-age, reduced use of evenaged management, and hardwood management to varying degrees (with Alternatives D, E, and F superior to Alternatives C1 and C2). All alternatives would also result in short-term visual impacts since all involve timber harvest to varying degrees and include the Road Management Plan. All would require mitigation as specified in this section.
Alt. C2 Nov. 2002 Plan						
Alt. D						
Alt. E						
Alt. F						